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JUDAISM AND WORLD RESTORATION

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THE paramount problem of to-day is the restoration of the world to normal conditions. It is a vast, complex problem involving political, economic, social and moral issues of a national as well as international character, and requiring for its solution the concentrated efforts of the best minds in various domains of thought and action. No one, who has made even a cursory study of these issues and the many new questions constantly arising, will undertake dogmatically to offer a panacea. The treaties that ended the late war, the League of Nations, the International Court, the Washington Conference resulting in a partial limitation of armaments, the Genoa Conference, and the forthcoming Hague Conference, while not affording a specific cure for the world's evils, present certain practical remedies for the most pressing needs and justify the conviction that the consummation of universal peace and prosperity is within the range of possibility. If this note of optimism will swell into a general chorus of radiant hope and dissipate the dismal croakings of despair, it will aid in the speedy recuperation of nations and their subsequent coöperation for the welfare of humanity.

While many agencies, political, industrial, capitalistic, educational, etc., are contributing their theoretical and practical measures towards an elucidation and solution of these great world perplexities, it is pertinent to ask, what part Religion can and will take in the rebuilding of the world. That Religion is

vitality interested in the salvaging of humanity is self-evident, but whether it will become an active factor in resurrecting the dead bones of our civilization and investing them with a new body and soul is a mooted question.

Religion has often failed the world in a great crisis such as the late war presented. The great religions lost the opportunities of preventing the war, as well as of bringing it to a close. The war was an evidence of the impotence of religions to redeem mankind from sin and transgression. This fact cannot be successfully parried. The war lords who were responsible for the inception and continuance of the stupendous holocaust were members and supporters of the Church. They even claimed to be inspired by the Almighty to undertake the butchery of God's children. The Church stood aghast and helpless at such monstrous arrogance and blasphemy. As an organized institution for the moral redemption of mankind the Church failed.

The various religions, however, compensated in a measure for this egregious fiasco by using their best offices, at home and in the field, to assuage suffering and comfort the sick, the dying and the sorrowing. Such remedial ministrations, as well as the preservation of the morale of soldiers and civilians, saved religion from a complete collapse. The religions of the world still live, but they are again on trial. They could not save the nations from almost totally destroying one another. Will they be of valuable service in cementing peace, insuring prosperity, and restoring the joy of living?

This question can perhaps best be answered by inquiring why religions, or at least the organized churches of the dominant religions, failed to save humanity against itself. Because *these churches have been more interested in saving themselves than humanity*. In their platforms or creeds they professed to seek truth and human brotherhood; but in reality it transpired that they sought to establish their particular theology as the absolute truth, and their own group or sect as the elect and the basis of a universal brotherhood. Theology, not ethics, became the crux of human salvation. Men were judged, not by the purity of their lives, but by the particular brand of their theology. Men of the noblest ethical character were punished, tortured and even put

to death for so-called heresy with regard to their opinions and teachings about God. Theology became the rock on which humanity split. Sects multiplied because of variations in the creeds as to the nature of the Deity, as well as to the value and importance of certain rituals, ceremonials and Biblical interpretations. Sectarianism was substituted for religion and totally eclipsed the importance of moral teaching and exhortation. Churches preached love of man, but what they really meant was love for the man who accepted a particular ironclad form of creed and ritual. The same churches even sought to control educational institutions in order to bias the minds of future leaders in favor of a certain approved stamp or standard of religious belief and practice. The same churches, furthermore, endeavored to inject religion into government affairs, *i. e.*, into politics, in order to engraft particular class legislation upon state and national assemblies and thus use political power for ecclesiastical propaganda. Some churches sought also social control and endeavored to upset the equilibrium of the world by encouraging and upholding social revolutions, for the purpose of winning the radical elements as adherents of their particular church organizations and of thus weakening other faiths that held aloof from compromising with social and political movements. Some sects of the dominant churches busied themselves with the creation of missionaries who were sent forth ostensibly to save "lost souls" but in reality to wage an insidious campaign against other religions.

While the work of conscientious missionaries was productive of much good, the effect of even their activities left in the minds of converts a sense of superiority which prejudiced them against missionaries of other faiths. This prejudice, together with a spirit of rivalry among missionaries of various denominations, tended to create or intensify a clashing of the faiths. There is no doubt that disunity amongst the churches contributed to the impotence of religions in the world's great crises. Religions fought against one another instead of uniting against their common foes, to wit: materialism, atheism, sensualism, crass selfishness, human greed, overweening pride and combativeness. It has often happened that, while doctors debated as to the nature

of a disease and the best means of curing it, the disease gained time and power to kill the patient. So while the Doctors of Religion (Theology) quarreled and intrigued for selfish interests, Satan conquered the world. It has naturally resulted from the interference of certain churches with government, educational, social and political agencies, as well as with representatives and devotees of other faiths, that persecutions, riots, pogroms and even wars were fomented or at least encouraged and supported in the interest of militant religions.

Militant religions! The very thought is a paradox that would seem preposterous. Truth, however, begs description of the many crimes that have been committed in the name of religion. Slogans, like "the end justifies the means", "burn the body to save the soul," were inspired by the vicious militancy of fanatic ecclesiasts. What with intolerance, bigotry and persecutions, to say nothing of social and political discriminations, instigated and promoted by authorized agents of the regnant churches during the past two thousand years, much time has been lost, untold monies and energies have been wasted, and the redemption of mankind postponed to a dim and distant future!

These conclusions are not mere sensational and unfounded statements, but matters of common knowledge founded upon historical records. Lecky's chapter on *Persecutions* in his *Rationalism in Europe*, Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, Lea's *Spanish Inquisition*, White's *Warfare of Science with Theology*, the well known "murders of the Innocents", the massacre of St. Bartholomew, the Crusades, the pogroms of Russia, are only a few indications of the innumerable authentic reports of the churches' warfare against humanity; of the failure of the faiths to destroy crime, hatred, cruelty and war because they themselves resorted to those inhuman means to foster what they called religion. The inconsistencies of the devotees of the Church, the incongruities between their profession and practice, have in great measure been responsible for the failure of the churches to prevent or to stop war. Men have instinctively pursued the course indicated by Shylock's natural resentment in the words: "The villainy you teach me, I will execute, and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction."

The irresistible inference from the logic of history constrains us to the conviction that, if the Church is to play any part in the world's restoration, that part must first include a reformation of church methods. Insistence upon an ironclad theology and ritual and a literal Bible, with the resultant militant sectarianism, pernicious missionarizing, and interference with government, politics, education and other religions, must be abandoned. For in those directions of religious militancy lie continued failure and the ultimate break up of civilization. The churches that will not heed the lesson taught by the recent disappointment of humanity at the impotence of Religion to make good its claim as a Vicar of Heaven for the salvation of mankind, must bear the responsibility for a return of the Dark Ages.

Judaism fortunately is free from the aspersion cast upon religion in general because of its recent failure, for Judaism is a minority religion and therefore could not be expected to exert that great influence and power necessary for holding in leash the wicked, rebellious and combative forces of nations. Judaism has itself suffered from the intolerance, aggressiveness and cruelty of militant churches and is a living witness of the curse of religious prejudice and persecution. For over two thousand years Judaism has been the butt and sport of religious fanaticism and misguided evangelical efforts at forcible conversion. Judaism has, however, not executed the villainy it was taught, but has studiously refrained from "bettering" an instruction it did not approve. Judaism has persistently stood aloof from religious intrigues and militant propaganda. It has refused to become a missionary religion, in the ordinary sense of that term, because it has believed and taught that every man has an inalienable right to interpret God according to his best lights and to worship his God according to the dictates of his own and not another's conscience.

If Judaism is to take a part in the world's restoration, and there is no reason why it should not, it will not be as a missionary or militant religion, but as an educational and moral agency co-operating with other similar agencies for the upbuilding of a higher civilization. It may appear heretical to some religious zealots that I call religion, particularly Judaism, an educational

and moral agency. They have assumed to regard themselves as commissioned by God to convert men to their own faith peaceably if they could, but by fire and sword if necessary. Judaism denounces such methods of conversion as blasphemy. It is legitimate to teach one's cherished principles in private and public. It is even a duty for one to promulgate what he conscientiously regards as the truth which would redound to the benefit of humanity. It is also proper for one to create certain religious, social or other activities that would convey, in concrete and attractive form, the lessons or principles that one regarded as necessary for man's salvation, and it is furthermore in keeping with the eternal fitness of things to invite men to participate in such activities with the hope that they may be spiritually benefited by them. It is, however, not only false but heretical for anyone to claim that he has a divine charge to force upon the world a revealed version of God and religion. Revelation, so-called, is often but a misnomer for a personal opinion.

Judaism will hasten the world's rehabilitation if it can succeed in placing all religions upon the high and equal plane of educational and moral agencies. All ministers, priests and rabbis would then be regarded as teachers of God and His law. And as teachers they could use only approved educational methods which have discarded all punitive and coercive measures.

Taking a positive stand, then, as an educational and moral agency in the world's upbuilding, what has Judaism to teach and what practical means can it propose for the rehabilitation of nations and the restoration of universal confidence, peace and prosperity?

Judaism has the same ethical lesson to teach to-day which it taught over three thousand years ago at Sinai, and which the world has not yet completely learned or practised, namely the categorical imperatives of the Decalogue: Unity of God; Spiritual Worship; Holiness of God; The Sabbath; Filial Devotion; Sacredness of Life; Sanctity of Marriage; Right of Property; Truth; Purity of the Spirit. (See *Exodus*, XX). The Ten Commandments, giving mandatory expression to these principles, constitute an ethical religion sufficient in

itself to reform mankind. They inculcate an absolute standard of right with a divine sanction; the only sanction that is, without question, proof against sophistical distortion or peremptory appeal. A utilitarian philosophy of ethics is untenable, but the injunctions to safeguard the unity, spirituality and holiness of God, the Sabbath, the honor of parents and the home, as well as life, property, truth and the purity of the soul, are as sound as the laws of gravitation, heat, light and electricity. The latter, as well as the former, are the laws of God. On and for these ethical laws, Judaism stands uncompromisingly. In addition to the Decalogue, Judaism espouses liberty in all its applications; for it teaches, "Ye are the children of God and cannot be slaves to any man." It preached the first form of democratic government when Moses enjoined the people to select judges over thousands, over hundreds, over fifties, etc. But Judaism, not content with mere laws for the preservation of right relations between man and man, commanded "Thou shalt love thy fellow man as thyself". (*Leviticus* XIX-18). And as basis for such human brotherhood we can point to the words, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul and might." (*Deuteronomy* VI-4).

We have learned that Judaism is not merely a religion of theories, but of ceremonies; not merely of ceremonies, but of laws; not merely of laws, but also of love. Law and love combine to make Judaism a unique ethical religion which the prophet expressed succinctly in the words: "He hath told thee, O Man, what God requires of thee, but to execute justice, love mercy and walk humbly before thy God." Here is a summary of Judaism, its irreducible minimum, expressed in the terms, Justice, Mercy, Humility. Had the war lords of Europe been guided by these three great fundamental principles or ideals there would have been no war. They sought not justice, but only their selfish supremacy; they were not permeated with mercy, for they butchered men, women and children in cold blood to achieve their purpose; they had no humility, for they strutted forth with insolent arrogance as long as they were protected by guns and ironclads. Judaism, by insisting on justice, mercy and humility and inducing the world to accept this minimum, will go very

far in redeeming mankind from the error of sin and false beliefs. And when men have learned to practice justice, mercy and humility, they will appreciate the great prophetic ideal, "Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us all? Why then shall we deal treacherously, every man against his brother?" Here is the basis for a common Brotherhood of man growing out of a common Fatherhood of God. If we believe in one God, then all men are his children; then humanity is one family; then why all this intrigue and treachery? Why brother against brother? Why? Only because Religion, through its false application thus far, has been a great fiasco. Churches have preached brotherhood, but they have divided man into hostile sects, denominations, factions. They have split hairs about theological speculations and religious casuistry instead of proving that the divine rights of man are superior to the so-called divine rights of kings and false priests. Judaism would call a confused, misguided and mistreated world back to first principles and demand a universal brotherhood or a united world, that shall acknowledge the God of truth, justice, love and peace as the only King.

A united world is the great optimistic vision of Judaism, and to attain that end the prophets of Israel, thousands of years ago, preached absolute disarmament in that sterling utterance, "They shall beat their swords into plough-shares, their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, and they shall learn the arts of war no more." Judaism has throughout the ages endeavored to maintain that ideal of total disarmament on the part of all nations as a requisite for the abolition of war. Since the days of the Prophets it has never undertaken or sanctioned war for conquest and has never resorted to or encouraged religious persecution. Had the other religions upheld the prophetic ideal of disarmament, much good might have resulted. The late war has proved that ecclesiastical edicts have been ineffective for the creation of world peace. And they have been ineffective because the militancy of the churches contradicted and neutralized the peace professions. Nations would not heed the peace offers of religions that themselves were aggressive and militant. Judaism has taught, "These are the laws which you shall keep, in order to live through them." That holds

good for nations as well as individuals. The salvation of the world, according to Judaism, depends on laws, rightly conceived and justly executed. In other words, the world can be redeemed by means of the Ten Commandments, the practice of justice, mercy and humility, the love of God and man, liberty, equality and fraternity for all people, a government of laws and not of men,—save as they represent the laws through democratic choice,—the abolition of war, and the substitution therefor of a universal Supreme Court.

Those principles and ideals can however not be carried out by Judaism or by any other faith alone. What is needed is concerted action on the part of religions—a League of Religions, that will overlook points of disagreement and unite for the promotion of those principles and ideals on which agreement can be had. As a rule the points of disagreement relate to theology, ritual, Biblical interpretations, sacraments, which concern only devotees of a particular faith and might well be held in abeyance in a consideration of problems for the establishment of world peace. A League of Religions founded on a broad platform of the Ethical Reformation of Mankind could formulate plans for the general welfare without infringing upon the autonomy of constituent religions. Such a League could unequivocally endorse the Ten Commandments, agree upon abandonment of aggressive and competitive missionary efforts, emphasize the total separation of Church and State, denounce and oppose all forms of religious prejudice and discrimination, and advocate the complete disarmament of nations. Such a League could militate against religious competition and unite churches in combating the common enemies of religion and humanity, namely falsehood, injustice, crime and war. It could create a sound public opinion throughout the world on behalf of international amity and peace that would be irresistible. The word of the ancient prophet of Israel, “Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us all? Why shall we deal treacherously one against the other?” would then be heeded by all men. The League of Religions would thus become the precursor of the Brotherhood of Man.

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